

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

March 7, 1963

Honorable Lyndon B. Johnson
Vice President of the United States
The Capitol
Washington, D. C.

Dear Lyndon:

I am attaching a copy of a statement which I released in the House of Representatives today in regard to intelligence. I think the situation is getting out of hand, and I felt this action on my part might possibly be helpful to you in dealing with it.

I only made up my mind to make this statement this morning after reading in the morning paper about intelligence which we had gathered in Cuba, with respect to Soviet activities in and near caves in Cuba, according to a high-ranking Army officer.

If I can be helpful in this important matter, I would be honored to have you call upon me.

Sincerely,

George
George Mahon

Enclosure

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MR. SPEAKER, I shall ask the President, the Vice President and the Speaker of the House to undertake to coordinate a course of action for the purpose of halting the rapid erosion of our national intelligence effort. The present situation is outrageous and intolerable.

There has been talk of an intelligence gap. There is an intelligence gap. The gap is in the intelligence of those who are daily revealing the secrets of the intelligence operations of the United States Government. In recent weeks there has been a great excess of talk about the procedures of our intelligence apparatus. Critics have made public statements on matters which should never be discussed in public. The Administration has mistakenly allowed itself to be goaded into revealing information detrimental to our best interests.

Along with many other Americans I am tired of these demonstrations of bad judgment. Every day some high ranking intelligence officer is quoted in the newspapers on one subject or another. These are men who, from the standpoint of the general public, should neither be seen nor heard. A passion for anonymity is an integral part of their jobs. Members of both the Legislative and Executive branches have publicly discussed matters which should only be discussed behind closed doors. Headlines are not so precious as to warrant jeopardizing our national security.

The deterioration of secrecy in regard to our intelligence-gathering techniques began in 1960 when a U-2 plane was shot down over Russia. Neither the Executive branch nor the Legislative branch is blameless in revealing secrets. Both Democrats and Republicans must share the blame. The question, however, is not so much who is to blame for the past, but where do we go from here.

To be successful, intelligence activities must be secret. To let the enemy know just how many of his secrets we know and just which ones we do not know, gives him a priceless advantage. Today's headline may cost the lives of the human sources of information. The enemy can find our intelligence sources much more easily when he

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knows what we have found out. This knowledge helps to pinpoint the location of intelligence activities, and once knowing the location, the discovery of the means is much easier and as a result intelligence sources dry up.

Our immaturity and indiscretion in these constant disclosures is making us the laughing stock of the world. Officials in Moscow, Peking, and Havana must applaud our stupidity in announcing publicly facts which they would gladly spend huge sums of money endeavoring to obtain. Responsibility on our part is urgently required. Let us be silent with respect to these sensitive matters.

Mr. John McCone, as Director of CIA, is charged with protection of intelligence sources. Public Law 253, 80th Congress, 1st Session, states, "And provided further that the Director of Central Intelligence shall be responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure;". I call on him to fully carry out the difficult and important duties of his office in this respect. A government-wide coordination of effort is required.

The American people are interested in our intelligence activities. They are interested in all phases of the workings of their government and their curiosities are aroused by the aura of mystery and adventure which surrounds the intelligence business. But we are not playing games. Our national survival to a great extent depends upon our knowledge of our enemies' activities. The price we pay for the luxury of public disclosure of intelligence activities is the further erosion of our capabilities in this field. It is difficult enough to obtain information from closed Communist societies. The American people, the press, and the officials of the Executive and Legislative branches of the Government must stop making a most difficult task more difficult.

There is room for plenty of discussion and criticism of our government without revealing sensitive intelligence information.